

IN THE CLAIMS

1-17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim [[17]] 20, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization (\overline{DP}) of at least 20.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 18, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization (\overline{DP}) of at least 25.

20. (Currently Amended) A method for the inhibition or treatment of systemic infections in humans or vertebrates comprising administering, to humans or vertebrates having a systemic infection caused by an invasion of the blood stream by Gram-positive or Gram-negative pathogenic bacteria, a composition ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of

an effective amount of a fermentable dietary fiber or a mixture of fermentable dietary fibers, the fiber being an inulin-type fructan or mixture of inulin-type fructans; and one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients.

wherein the composition is administered orally or through tube feeding.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 20, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of Clostridia, Bacteroides, Listeria, Candida and Salmonella.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim [[17]] 20, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 40 g/day.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim [[17]] 20, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 25 g/day.

25-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) A method for the inhibition or treatment of an infection occupying the lymph or blood in humans or vertebrates comprising administering, to humans or vertebrates having an infection caused by Gram-positive or Gram-negative pathogenic bacteria in the lymph or blood, a composition ~~comprising~~ consisting essentially of

an effective amount of a fermentable dietary fiber or a mixture of fermentable dietary fibers, the fiber being an inulin-type fructan or mixture of inulin-type fructans; and one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients.

wherein the composition is administered orally or through tube feeding.

28-29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization \overline{DP} of at least 20.

31. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the fiber is chicory inulin with an average degree of polymerization \overline{DP} of at least 25.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of Clostridia, Bacteroides, Listeria, Candida and Salmonella.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 40 g/day.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the human or vertebrate is an adult human and the amount of fiber administered to the adult human ranges from 5 to 25 g/day.

35-36. (Canceled)

37. (New) A method for the inhibition or treatment of systemic infections in humans or vertebrates, comprising

administering, to humans or vertebrates having a systemic infection caused by an invasion of the blood stream by Gram-positive or Gram-negative pathogenic bacteria, a functional food composition comprising an effective amount of a fermentable dietary fiber or a mixture of fermentable dietary fibers, the fiber being an inulin-type fructan or mixture of inulin-type fructans.

38. (New) The method of Claim 37, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of Listeria and Salmonella.

39. (New) The method of Claim 20, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of Listeria and Salmonella.

40. (New) The method of Claim 27, wherein the pathogenic bacteria is selected from the group consisting of Listeria and Salmonella.